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SUPPORT THE SLP

**Capitalism Juggling
With Numbers - and
Workers' Lives**

Things aren't always as simple as they seem, at least not according to *The New York Times*. When a company says it plans to lay off hundreds or thousands of workers, for example, it may not mean precisely what it says. To sort that out, "expert" opinions were needed. And, sure enough, the *Times* collected several for a story it ran on Jan. 19.

One was offered by Patrick Carey of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. "When a company announces 5,000 layoffs," he said, "sometimes 5,000 people aren't being laid off."

How's that again? Well, it goes like this.

When the Sara Lee company announced it was laying off 7,000 workers, less than half were workers in the United States. The majority were workers in other countries. Apparently they don't count, so why worry about them?

The same goes for Whirlpool, which plans to give 6,000 workers the old heave-ho. "Of the first 2,000 cuts, 1,000 would come in Brazil and about 650 in Asia and Europe," the *Times* reported the company as saying. "Of the 400 North Americans losing their jobs...about half would be workers in their 50s and 60s who accept early retirement packages."

On the theory that you cannot accept what is not offered we would guess that Whirlpool sought out those 200 workers and made them an offer they couldn't refuse: take it or go with the other 200 who got, what? Well, the *Times* didn't say, precisely; but at a minimum it was the boot.

But even that is not the main thing. The main thing is that there is as much hiring as there is firing these days. Headlines that accent the negative sometimes eliminate the positive. While companies were announcing close to 140,000 layoffs in January they were hiring 200,000. That, said the *Times*, is what the Department of Labor reported.

We cannot dispute it, but even if the numbers are correct, or even nearly so, they obviously create a false impression. The impression they create is that things come out equal, or better than equal, since more jobs are added than lost. But all jobs aren't equal when it comes to wages paid. The worker who loses a job in one town may have to find a replacement in another town, or even another state. Incomes are interrupted, families are disrupted, life in general becomes more difficult and uncertain.

Juggling with numbers to disguise social problems and imminent crises is nothing new. It is meant to disarm the unwary. But experience shows that when the juggling gets to be as conspicuous as it's getting to be now, it is a virtual certainty that the ruling class and its apologists are not as confident

(Continued on page 2)

AFL-CIO Nearing Collapse, Says Federation President

When John J. Sweeney took over as president of the AFL-CIO five years ago, he said that the federation's affiliated unions must recruit at least 1 million new dues-paying members every year to offset the losses experienced under preceding administrations.

Sweeney has frequently beaten the drum for his recruitment drive and announced new schemes to attract workers to the trade unions. At times he has also claimed that the effort was paying off. Indeed, unions claim that they brought in 350,000 new members in 2000 compared to less than 100,000 several years ago.

These results obviously have not been enough to offset the losses. In that respect, the effort has been such a miserable failure that Sweeney is reported to have told a "closed door" meeting of union officials in Los Angeles last month that unless the decline in membership is reversed the AFL-CIO might collapse.

According to a report printed in *The New York Times* on Feb. 15, an unnamed AFL-CIO official who attended the Los Angeles meeting quoted Sweeney as informing union officials that their recruiting and organizing efforts were woefully inadequate.

"Not only are the numbers totally unsatisfactory," Sweeney reportedly said, "but if we don't begin to turn this around quickly and almost immediately, the drift in the other direction is

going to make it virtually impossible to continue to exist as a viable institution and to have any impact on the issues we care about."

labor relations, said some industrial unions appeared to have grown discouraged about organizing because so many manufacturers move operations

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Sweeney has also scheduled a special meeting of union officials this month to repeat his warning and to urge unions to devote more of their resources and energies to recruitment and organizing drives.

Union officials and academics attribute the decline in union membership (now down to 16.2 million, or only 13.5 percent of all workers in the country) to several causes. The same *New York Times* article that reported Sweeney's Los Angeles warning cited two examples.

"Kate Bronfenbrenner, research director at Cornell University's school of

overseas, or threaten to move them, if they become unionized. She conducted a survey that found that managers at 70 percent of factories involved in organizing drives threaten to close if workers decide to unionize. Workers often say such threats discourage them from voting to join a union."

The second example was provided by Leo Gerard, president of the United Steel Workers.

"Mr. Gerard said the main reason unions were not organizing hundreds of thousands more workers each year

(Continued on page 7)

Capitalism's Cold War Waste Stalks Us All

By B.B.

Ironically, the era of nuclear madness in the United States has willy-nilly turned out to be focused on population centers that the capitalist state ostensibly sought to protect against rival imperialist challenges during the Cold War era.

Boomerang-like, the radioactive wastes emanating from bomb-making centers within the United States are to be transported cross country, often through large communities, for decades to come. The process could deliver widespread death.

This is the fear of many who live along route I-20 in northern Texas. That is one route over which trucks will be hauling tons of transuranic wastes—tools, clothing and other paraphernalia contaminated by radioactive plutonium, neptunium, americium, curium and californium.

The very existence of such hazardous wastes, much less their transportation through populated areas, poses a threat to the whole country. Nonetheless, there are those whose minds are too small to compass matters on such a scale. They do not grasp that a threat of this sort is at least national in scope.

They cannot see beyond their own platters and bibs.

An example of such small-minded and provincial concerns is that heard from one Grady Smithey of the Duncanville, Tex., City Council. After proclaiming that the federal government did not ask the town's permission to use its own highway, I-20, Smithey demanded that the United States "pony up some money" to build service roads for emergency use—as if service roads could transport a nuclear emergency to where it could do no harm. Such puny demands obviously will not eliminate the nightmare that would follow the release of the most toxic substance known.

The so-called nuclear archipelago, which embraces the sources of nuclear wastes and the "burial grounds" to where they are to be transported, embraces the entire country in its grip. It is connected by major highways that run from coast to coast, from the Savannah River Site in South Carolina to the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California. These interstate highways will be the routes for up to 4,299 truck trips over 34 years. The trucks are expected to carry 35,000 tons of nuclear waste

material from such sources as the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory in the Northwest and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, N.M.

At Carlsbad, the nuclear waste will be "loaded onto elevators and taken 2,150 feet underground where it will be entombed in rock-salt formations." The formations are thought to be 250 million years old, and according to Greg Sahd of the Department of Energy they are "geologically stable." *Scientific American* quoted Sahd as saying that "none of the wastes will get into the ground water."

Such assurances by frontmen for bureaucratic agencies aren't worth the air it takes to breathe them out. If something goes wrong with any one of the stainless steel containers in which the wastes will be carried to the Carlsbad site, plutonium will be released into the atmosphere. Plutonium is lethal for 240,000 years. Inhaling as little as 0.08 milligrams is enough to cause fatal lung cancer.

Don Hancock, director of the Southwest Information Research Center, is

(Continued on page 3)

Statistical Fig Leaf Can't Hide Obscenity of Capitalist Wealth

By B.B.

Last month's issue of *Scientific American* offered a statistical summary and some commentary on a *Forbes* survey of the 400 richest Americans and the world's richest people.

What the survey showed is the extent to which the capitalist class succeeds in robbing the working class of the wealth that the latter, and only the latter, produces.

What the survey does not explore, however, is the process by which this accumulation and concentration of social wealth is conducted. After all, that is not a source of concern for the likes of Mr. Forbes and his magazine. Accumulating wealth is what the capitalist system is all about and, no doubt, he and those few who live on his side of the class divide can take some satisfaction in the progress they have made in that direction.

If there is a dark side from that angle of view it may be that such success might be noticed by those who live on the other side of the class divide. However, if the *Forbes* class loses a little sleep worrying about such things it is a small price to pay—surely smaller than the price being paid by those who live on the other side of the class divide.

What the *Forbes* survey found is that, worldwide, there are 590 reputed billionaires. Of those, the industrialized Western countries, including Japan, account for



E. Gentry for *The People*

445. About half, some 274, are Americans.

The 274 Americans own "2.6 percent of total personal wealth held by all Americans, compared to 33 percent held by the remaining 1 million households in the top one percent." Accordingly, 1,000,274 mostly capitalist "households" owned 35.6 percent of all U.S. wealth.

Lesser capitalists, represented by 9.2 million "households," own another 34 percent of all personal wealth in the country. In short, 10.2 million families own 69 percent of the nation's wealth while the balance, 92.3 million families or households, own 31 percent. However, even this imbalance may overstate wealth "ownership" for the working-class majority.

For example, Edward N. Wolff of New

York University discounted equity in so-called owner-occupied dwellings. For the most part, mortgage companies are the real owners of working-class homes. Similarly with automobiles, the indispensable means of "public" transportation in the United States.

"Ownership," Wolff quipped, is the proverbial "shirt on one's back." His analysis, as summarized by *Scientific American*, shows that, "The bottom 40 percent of middle-aged householders in 1998 had virtually no financial wealth and thus were exceptionally vulnerable to economic shocks or personal disability." Wolff also found that the "financial wealth of the middle 20 percent would typically carry them for two to four months." Pursuing this line of

nature of that Paris bazaar, but that it shall be constructed according to all the revelations of science.

It is not *human nature* that socialism seeks to revolutionize, it seeks to revolutionize the *human intellect*. That that can be revolutionized even the *Sunday Herald* will not deny. Knowledge steadily supplants ignorance. Building squarely upon human nature, socialism knows that the moment the intellect of man has been rid of the ignorance which capitalism stuffs it full with, the moment the intellect of man has been revolutionized to the point of realizing that the vermin of the capitalist class crawling over mankind is not inevitable and can be gotten rid of by the "rough on the capitalist roaches"—socialism—that moment, human nature will assert itself as it always does, and wipe the thing off the face of the earth.

There is nothing the matter with "human nature." Revolutionize it? Not a bit! Human nature is the trusty infantry, cavalry and artillery, which, commanded by the field marshal of socialist intellect, will tear down the deathtrap of capitalist society, and in its stead rear the palace of the Socialist Republic, where he who works shall live, and he who can but won't shall perish.

tionized before socialism is established, and, consequently, socialism is impossible, amounts to holding that buildings in which large crowds are congregated should be built of most inflammable material, because human beings will anyhow act as wild beasts; and that being "human nature," cannot be revolutionized. The posture of socialism amounts to holding that buildings in which large crowds are congregated should be constructed of fireproof material only, and should be designed according to all the inventions and discoveries of science, because, human nature being good or bad, angelic or fiendish, kind or brutish, according to the material exigencies of its surroundings, it is the duty of the civilized architect to provide for surroundings that will not promote the bad, the fiendish, the brutish, but will promote the good, the angelic, the kind manifestations of human nature.

The illustration taken by the *Sunday Herald*, as to the failure of religion to revolutionize human nature, defeats itself and proves the socialist contention. It is true that "after all the centuries" during which religion has had full sway "greed and covetousness have not been abandoned." The posture of religion during all these centuries has been the posture of the man, who, standing by that Paris bazaar on fire, would have tried to preach benevolence to the panic-stricken crowd. His words would have fallen upon deaf ears—so and for the same reason, the voice of religion has fallen upon deaf ears during all these centuries, during which it has been and continues to be preached to a panic-stricken humanity. The material conditions for the nobler part of mankind have been absent. It is socialism, and socialism alone, that demands and will enforce the demand, that the social structure be not of the haphazard and deadly

inquiry, Wolff added that the "figures for the next 20 percent and the top 20 percent are, respectively, eight to 18 months and two to seven years."

Using Wolff's figures, 73.8 million American working-class "households" have between "zilch" and 18 months of financial cushion! Hardly a cheering thought in this wonderful period of so-called prosperity.

For African-American and Hispanic workers, the facts are even grimmer. "In 1998," *Scientific American's* summary of the *Forbes* survey continued, "27 percent of black and 36 percent of Hispanic households had zero or negative net worth, compared with 15 percent of non-Hispanic whites."

What the *Forbes* figures reveal is an immense accumulation of *surplus value*, i.e., wealth produced by the working class and plundered by a minuscule capitalist class that owns and controls the nation's productive forces.

Capitalist wealth resides in ownership of productive property. Workers' "wealth" resides within themselves, i.e., in their ability to perform the physical and mental tasks needed by the owners of the nation's industries and services. Without that collective ability of the working class to perform useful and productive tasks there would be no social wealth. The imbalance that channels the wealth produced by the useful class into the hands of a useless class of capitalist idlers is the hallmark of the capitalist system. This much is shown by the *Scientific American* article on "The Rich and Other Americans." However, what neither *Scientific American* nor *Forbes* wanted to show was how this result points the finger of guilt at the capitalist system and reaches out to shake the working class from its lethargy.

A De Leon Editorial

Human Conditions Needed!

Socialism will provide the requirements of a society in which human dignity and well-being will prevail.

Human Nature

(*Daily People*, May 27, 1906)

In the opinion of the Boston *Sunday Herald* of May 13, "the fundamental error of socialism consists in thinking that human nature can be revolutionized." The "fundamental error" in the premises lies, not with socialism for "thinking that human nature can be revolutionized," but with the *Sunday Herald* for thinking that socialism has any such thought, and that such revolution is requisite for socialism. Neither supposition is true. The truth lies precisely in the opposite direction. Socialism does not think that human nature can be revolutionized; socialism does not aim at revolutionizing human nature; socialism builds upon human nature.

Only a few years ago a charity fair was held in Paris. The affair was gotten up upon a large scale, so large a scale that a new building had to be hastily improvised for the bazaar and ball. In the midst of the festivities the flimsy structure took fire. The pitch, with which the joists of the roof had been fastened, melted and rained down a scalding shower upon the heads of the celebrants; what with that and the flames that leaped up and across from all directions, a panic broke out; men trampled upon women, women upon children, all upon each, each upon all. A large crowd, comporting itself a minute before in civilized and considerate manner, were turned into hyenas. Which was an exhibition of human nature? When each individual in that crowd vied with each other individual in politeness and considerateness, or when all became like wild beasts? The Boston *Sunday Herald* and the lay and clerical elements, whose opinion it utters, answer: "The latter." Socialism answers: "Both."

The posture of those who declare that human nature would have to be revolu-

...Juggling

(Continued from page 1)

about the stability of their system as they pretend.

Something is in the wind, and it bodes no good for the working class, the working class of the U.S.A. included. Now is the time for renewed vigilance and militance for Socialists. The SLP must be prepared for the crisis that almost certainly is imminent. You can help the SLP prepare for it by your contribution to the 45th National Convention Banquet Fund. Please use the coupon on page 6 to contribute as generously as you can.

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By Robert Bills

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Depleted Uranium Plagues Balkans and Iraq

By Diane Secor

Depleted uranium, or DU, is a derivative of enriched uranium. Ammunition made with DU has found favor with militarists because of its superiority as an armor-piercing weapon. Its drawback is that DU shells release uranium oxide dust upon impact. The dust is radioactive, and exposure to it has been linked to diseases afflicting American, British and other veterans of the wars in which it was used. Naturally, civilians in countries where the wars were waged have been affected, regardless of which side to the conflict they supported or believed waged war in their interests, not to mention combatants from opposing forces.

Although militarists and politicians, particularly in the United States and Great Britain, have emphatically denied any connection between DU and the ailments many veterans complain of, there is mounting evidence that the substance kills in more ways than one. In war, if used "properly," DU-laced ammunition brings swift and sudden death. However, the lingering illnesses and prolonged suffering that it inflicts on those who survive its war-time uses may fit the proverbial formula for a fate worse than death.

According to the Jan. 24 issue of Australia's *Sydney Morning Herald*, some NATO veterans of the Kosovo and Bosnia conflicts from seven European countries have developed leukemia and other cancers. Similar ailments have been diagnosed in U.S. and allied Gulf War veterans. Since "the latent period of carcinogens...is two to 10 years for leukemia and 15 to 60 years for solid cancer," these reported instances may only be the beginning of DU-related illnesses in veterans and "peacekeepers."

Moreover, the civilian populations of those areas of Bosnia, Yugoslavia, Kuwait and particularly Iraq are not only suffering from larger outbreaks of DU-related cancers, but also face environmental devastation.

When DU ammunition hits its target, the carcinogens fly in all directions. After the shell or missile demolishes a tank or some other target, the radioactive uranium oxide dust released penetrates drinking water and farmlands, thereby contaminating the food chain.

Those who defend the use of DU-laced ammunition claim that it is only marginally radioactive and could not possibly be the cause of higher-than-normal rates of

cancers in war veterans. Apparently, however, the toxic substances contained in DU ammunition are not limited to uranium oxide.

According to the *Sunday Times* of London, DU shells "were made out of material contaminated by a potentially lethal cocktail of nuclear waste...containing traces of elements that indicate the probable presence of plutonium and other highly toxic nuclear byproducts." (Jan. 21) The same report noted that U.N. officials "investigating the effects of DU in Kosovo...found traces of elements indicating plutonium."

The *Times* article also cited a recently published book in which the authors claim that "the only possible source for DU containing plutonium are Paducah, Ky., Portsmouth, Ohio, and Oak Ridge, Tenn., which used the contaminated uranium." The enriched uranium needed for nuclear weapons and nuclear fuel, and from which DU is derived, is produced at these three U.S. facilities.

Similarly, the *Morning Herald* reported that DU ammunition has "traces of plutonium and uranium 236, and probably neptunium and americium." This highly toxic nuclear waste is produced at

the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion plant. Uranium from Australia is imported to and enriched at the Paducah plant.

The suggestion is that the DU produced at Paducah and the other U.S. facilities has been contaminated by the other substances mentioned. Presumably the contamination has been continuous since before the 1990-1991 Gulf War.

Regardless of whether DU itself or its adulteration by other substances explains the health problems veterans complain of, the fact remains that the source of both is capitalist imperialism and militarism.

War and its weapons are as much a derivative of capitalism as DU is of enriched uranium. As long as the working class continues to tolerate a system that consumes humanity for profit as a glutton consumes food for pleasure it can expect more of the same, and worse.

"The capitalist class is not constructively or inferentially only a cannibal class," Daniel De Leon said in his *Two Pages From Roman History*. "The roots of capitalism are literally watered with the blood of the proletariat. The fields of production—mills, shops, railroad beds, yards—are strewn with the limbs and fallen bodies of workingmen. Capitalist 'progress' is built upon the skulls and crossbones of its working-class victims."

What is true on the "fields of production" certainly holds true on the fields of war.

'Justice' Department Shreds the Constitution

By Ken Boettcher

The Justice Department published new guidelines last month for police and prosecutors in cases involving computer crimes. The guidelines—based on existing laws and court precedent—allow, among other things, "private searches," "no-knock searches" and "secret searches."

Private searches include searches of your computer hard drives with the permission of your employer or even a coworker if you happen to work in an area shared by others. If the cops consider your computer an "instrumentality" of a crime, they may confiscate your computer in order to have it examined by an expert.

No-knock searches are those in which agents do not announce themselves before breaking into a home or office. The Justice Department guidelines justify these searches by observing that "Technically adept computer hackers have been known to use 'hot keys,' computer programs that destroy evidence when a special button is pressed. If agents knock at the door to announce their search, the suspect can simply press the button and activate the program to destroy the evidence." The manual also cites a 1997 Supreme Court decision, *Richards v. Wisconsin*, that provides precedent for warrantless no-knock searches when agents have a "reasonable suspicion" that evidence might otherwise be destroyed or the investigation obstructed.

Secret searches are those in which agents can break into homes or offices without residents knowing. As the Justice Department guidelines put it, "Sneak-and-peek searches may prove useful in searches for intangible computer data. For example, agents executing a sneak-and-peek warrant to search a computer may be able to enter a business after hours, and then exit the business without leaving any sign that the search occurred."

So much for the protections of the U.S. Constitution, which is being shredded by the misnamed Justice Department, amongst many other elements of the capitalist political state.

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hammer blows

Special Treatment for Anarchists

An Oregon legislator who says he is targeting the "political correctness" of hate crimes legislation has introduced a bill that would make it a hate crime to smash a store window or sabotage a company. There are already laws against such activities, of course. But the bill, introduced by Sen. Gary George (R-Newberg), would add an additional five years' imprisonment for anyone whose crime is motivated by "a hatred of people who subscribe to a set of political beliefs that support capitalism..."

'Big Brother' Is Watching-I

The FBI is using software called Carnivore to combat criminals who use the Internet. But the net cast by Carnivore catches virtually everyone who doesn't use 128-bit encryption in their e-mail. Carnivore is run from a computer that connects to the servers of Internet Service Providers and must sift through all incoming and outgoing e-mail in the process of monitoring any single e-mail account.

Thus the FBI is looking through the e-mail of thousands of people not suspected or charged with a crime, and those whose e-mail is searched have no protection or knowledge of the agency's unlawful or accidental seizures.

'Big Brother' Is Watching-II

Football fans who attended this year's Super Bowl did so under the watchful eye of a temporary law enforcement command center. Every person entering the Tampa, Fla., stadium was videotaped at the entrance turnstiles. Their faces were then digitized and compared by computer analysis to the faces of known criminals. Fans received no notice that they were being videotaped for such purposes.

Sewage Doesn't Smell

A public relations strategy document published by the Environmental Protection Agency illustrates the contempt in which that agency, and the capitalist enterprises it ostensibly regulates, holds "the public"—which is composed largely of the working-class majority.

The document promoted the marketing of sewage sludge as fertilizer, but noted that

there is a "major public acceptance barrier" to the practice. That barrier was "the widely held perception of sewage sludge as malodorous, disease causing or otherwise repulsive....There is an irrational component to public attitudes about sludge which means that public education will not be entirely successful." In short, experts like those in the EPA and the "sewage industry" are rational, while "the public" is not—because they think sewage stinks. —K.B.

De Leon examines every major argument—pro and con—on the union question, traces confusion on what unions can and cannot accomplish to its source in the American Federation of Labor, and outlines the general principles on which genuine and effective working-class unions can be built. One of De Leon's best.

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...Cold War Waste

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not entirely disarmed by such pronouncements as DOE spokesman Sahd was given to utter. "We think the site will leak in the long run," he said. He professed to be confident that no nuclear wastes were likely to spill from trucks, but could not keep from adding what we all know, namely that "things that couldn't happen have happened."

Indeed, despite all precautions, assurances, safety measures, training and warnings, the hazards of nuclear proliferation and disposal of wastes are another of capitalism's "swords of Damocles" that hang over humanity and will tax the abilities and resources of future socialist society.

However, any comparison between the way capitalism addresses its problems and the socialist approach must take into account the driving forces of production of each society.

the People
Founded April 5, 1891

The People (ISSN-0199-350X), continuing the *Weekly People*, is published monthly by the Socialist Labor Party of America, 661 Kings Row, San Jose, CA 95112-2724.

Periodicals postage paid at San Jose, CA 95101-7024. Postmaster: Send all address changes to *The People*, P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042-0218. Communications: Business and editorial matters should be addressed to *The People*, P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042-0218. Phone: (408) 280-7266. Fax: (408) 280-6964.

Production Staff: Donna Bills, Ken Boettcher, Genevieve Gunderson. Robert Bills, acting editor.

Access *The People* online at <http://www.slp.org>. Send e-mail to: thepeople@igc.org.

Rates: (domestic and foreign): Single copy, 50 cents. Subscriptions: \$5 for one year; \$8 for two years; \$10 for three years. By first-class mail, add \$6 per year. Bundle orders: 5-100 copies, \$8 per 100; 101-500 copies, \$7 per 100; 501-1,000 copies, \$6 per 100; 1,001 or more copies, \$5 per 100. Foreign subscriptions: Payment by international money order in U.S. dollars.

A PAGE FROM WORKING-CLASS HISTORY

The Singer Revolt

Last month we introduced our readers to a significant but almost forgotten episode in the history of the international labor or socialist movement, the 1911 Singer strike at Clydebank, Scotland.

The Singer strike was significant for several reasons. First is the part played by the Marxist-De Leonist Socialist Labor Party of Great Britain (SLPGB) and the Industrial Workers of Great Britain (IWGB). Second is that the strike was waged on industrial rather than craft or trade lines, at least as much as it could be within the confines of a single establishment such as the massive Singer manufacturing plant at Clydebank. Third, is the leading role that women played in the strike.

The latter is of special interest in its own right, of course, but especially in the context of this particular issue of *The People*, which happens to correspond to International Women's Day on March 8. Although the fact has been obscured, International Women's Day originated with the socialist movement. It was established by the International Socialist Congress at Copenhagen in 1910, just one year before the strike at Singer.

SLPGB and IWGB

The SLPGB was organized in 1903 and was closely associated with the SLP in America until its small core of valiant Marxist-De Leonist founders were overwhelmed by the effect that the Russian Revolution of 1917 had on the labor movement generally. The IWGB also succumbed in time, but when the Singer strike began in March 1911 it represented the principles on which the original Industrial Workers of the World was founded in the United States in 1905.

That the SLP can justly pride itself for its part in the Singer strike is attested to by the following observations made by the authors of *The Singer Strike: Clydebank, 1911*, which was prepared by the Glasgow

Labor History Workshop and published by the Clydebank District Library in 1989:

"It is clear that the SLP and the IWGB had a crucial role in the events of 1911—that of raising the workers' sense of their own collective power and their ability to challenge the decisions which controlled their lives. This can be seen clearly in the successes of the IWGB in various departments in Singer prior to mid-March 1911.



The Singer Testing Department employed 125 mostly women workers.

It can also be seen clearly in the adoption of the IWGB slogan which came to capture the very essence of the struggle: 'An injury to one is an injury to all.' The workers thus demanded the right to stand together, united in their strength and strong in their unity, to challenge the prerogatives of management."

To this the authors added:

"The women and men who took an active role in the SLP and IWGB and fought back against their bosses and the capitalist system were not taking an easy option. Mainstream trade unions would

very rarely stand up for these people if and when management attacked them, and there was no welfare state to fall back on when this happened. They jeopardized not only their livelihood, but that of their families and dependents by standing up for their socialist ideas."

The Women of Clydebank

According to the same authors, about

43 percent were aged 19 and under, and 80 percent aged 24 and under."

Male and female workers were strictly isolated from each other at the Singer plant and, typically, women were "almost entirely excluded from the more highly paid, skilled and more interesting work tasks...."

The part played by women in historic struggles such as the Singer strike of 1911 is often overlooked—even by Socialists. However, it should not be surprising that workers of both genders and all races are influenced by the prejudices that capitalist "culture" deliberately nurtures to smother the instinctive spark of classconsciousness. That the instinct survives despite all efforts to bury it is shown whenever the class struggle makes itself felt—and it was felt at Clydebank in 1911. As the authors of *The Singer Strike* put it:

"One of the most significant features of the Singer strike of 1911 was that it was initiated by female workers. This is a fact sometimes lost sight of due to the connection of the conflict with industrial unionism. Despite negligible levels of formal organization, the women in the polishing department did not hesitate to walk out in protest at Singer management's blatant exploitation—an attempt to increase the polishers' workload without additional pay. Moreover, evidence suggests that female workers in the plant were among the first to strike in support of the polishers, indicating a high degree of gender solidarity. Women workers also had an active role in the strike itself, with representation on the Strike Committee and two of the original women strikers formed part of the seven-member negotiating delegations to Singer management."

The following account of how the Clydebank strike was organized, conducted and ultimately defeated was printed in the May 1911 issue of *The Socialist*, official journal of the former SLPGB.

—Editor

A Spontaneous, Industrial Revolt

The action of the workers in Singer's was spontaneous, and was of the nature of an industrial revolt. To find an explanation of this uprising one has to follow developments for a few years back. Four or five years ago a few workers employed at Kilbowie commenced to talk of Industrial Unionism. The soil being peculiarly suitable for such seed, the result was the formation of an Industrial Union Group in January 1910. The Group flourished and developed so much that in January, 1911, it became affiliated to the Industrial Workers of Great Britain. Coincident with this change of ideas the economic condition of the workers was subject still further to the dominance of "Capital." The effects of economic development were felt keenly, and were driven home to the worker in no uncertain fashion. The speeding up of machines and the consequent increase of tension on the worker; the cutting of wages by breaking prices; the introduction of machinery which had the effect of displacing large numbers of workers; the callous organisation of the workers with a view to economy; the increased cost of living (recognised by the capitalist economists); added to all this, the industrial crisis that we have just passed through, left the workers even more completely at the mercy of the masters.

These were the conditions that gave rise to the revolt. The workers in the Cabinet Polishing Department (No. 26) and also those in the Buffing Department (No. 13) decided to obtain redress for outstanding

grievances in their separate Departments. The General Committee of the Industrial Union Group was advised to this effect on the Monday. The Committee thereupon offered the support of all the organised members to these Departments. On Tuesday the management was approached by a deputation from No. 26 Department, and it acceded to all the demands of the workers with the exception of one, which, incidentally, was the spark that caused the conflagration. The girls [sic] affected by this decision, being dissatisfied, claimed the promised support of the Industrial Unionists. Meanwhile, the workers in No. 13 Department had sent a deputation, representative of the whole Department, to state their grievances to the management, and were successful in getting a satisfactory settlement for the time. Immediately after receiving this concession, they, in common with other Departments, were called upon by the workers in No. 26 Department for their support. This was given at once with great spirit and unanimity, and they accordingly joined the ranks of the strikers that now numbered about two thousand. This magnificent action on the part of No. 13 Department is complete proof that the workers are beginning to realise the truth of the principle that "an injury to one is an injury to all."

Nor was this spirit confined to one Department, for next morning there was a general exodus of workers from the factory. It will easily be understood that the magnitude of the situation could only be met by some form of representation of the

vast number of workers. Accordingly the formation of a Strike Committee took place. This was done by each Department electing five delegates. The Strike Committee procured headquarters at the Rooms of the Clydebank Branch S.L.P., 78 Second Avenue, Clydebank. The Strike Committee was augmented day by day, until the following Monday, when the few remaining Departments, including the Power Station, came out in sympathy. The Strike Committee was now representative of nearly all of the Departments in the Factory, 37 out of 41 Departments having appointed delegates. This included, besides operators proper, Painters, Sheet Metal Workers, Shunters and Engine Drivers, Electrical Power Station Workers, a section of the Tool Shop (Engineers), Foundry Workers, General Storemen, etc., etc.

The Strike Committee being now at its fullest strength, it was decided to open negotiations with the management. An Interview Committee of seven was appointed to state to the management the demands of the workers (see Manifesto below). The first visit of the Interview Committee to the offices apparently took the management by surprise, as the Superintendent (the Manager was abroad at the time) promised to meet the deputation in the afternoon, and that the foremen of the Department in question (No. 26) would also be present, when the whole affair would be thrashed out. This was glorious work!! The "strike" was at an end! But, no; when the deputation returned in

the afternoon it was to find the management prepared.

The Superintendent stated the terms of the Company; terms so simple, so kind, that the deputation were very ungrateful in criticising them. It was the old, old story: "Once the workers come back to their work we will investigate." These terms were discussed very briefly by the Strike Committee and placed before the mass of the workers at the district meeting at night. (District meetings had been arranged in all districts to suit workers residing at a distance, in some cases 15 miles, from the Factory. These district meetings each had an official speaker, who reported the day's proceedings each evening at 6.30 P.M., and they were the only sources where authentic information could be got). In each of these districts the workers were unanimous in rejecting the Company's terms, and were determined to fight to a finish. On the following day the deputation again went to the offices to state the position of the workers *re* the Company's terms. But it was not to be just yet. The Superintendent had gone away, and the underlings could not say when he would be back. Perhaps he was only taking a day off, or just away on the usual routine work of his office (with 11,000 workers on strike at the gates)! Perhaps, which is most probable, he was in London conferring with the directors on the situation. However, the Strike Committee waited his arrival with patience, and were rewarded by his appearance on Thursday. Then the deputation proceeded to let him know of the position of the workers as to the terms of the Company. The result of this interview

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

was that "the Company had nothing to add to what had already been said." One of the things that "had already been said" was that the management would receive at any time, as they had done in the past, a deputation from any Department in which a grievance might exist, and an instance was given—that of the Buffing (13) Department (see Manifesto below).

On the following day (Friday) the Strike Committee discussed the advisability of recommending these terms to the workers. After the discussion, the deputation was sent to ratify these terms, so that there would be no ambiguity as to the settlement. They were received by the firm's representatives, who, taking this advance by [the] Strike Committee as a sign of weakness, re-stated their terms as follows;—The workers to return to work before their grievances would be considered; the management would be willing to receive deputations from any of the Departments, *but* that these deputations *must* be composed of workers *directly* concerned in the dispute.

This was a decided change from the previous statements made by them to the deputation from No. 13 Department. This change of front had the effect of dispelling any doubt as to the favourableness, or otherwise, of the terms. The workers, on hearing this, became more determined than ever to obtain a complete settlement before resuming work. The Strike Committee then drew up, and caused to be inserted in the Press, the following Manifesto, which will explain the position exactly at this time:—

The following Manifesto has been issued by the Strike Committee in order that the general public might get the real facts in the case, and thereby understand the workers' reason for embarking on this industrial struggle:—

The particular grievance at present originated in the cabinet polishing department, where there were formerly 15 girls employed on a particular operation, 12 on piece and three on time rates—the collective weekly wage of the time girls being 44/ [i.e., 44 shillings], one at 16/ and two at 14/. These time girls being withdrawn, the remaining 12 girls on piecework were being compelled to do extra work, which meant an average weekly loss of 2/. The girls now demand 2d [i.e., 2 pence] per 100 of an increase, which still leaves an average of 11 shillings in the firm's favour. This grievance is only the culminating point in a series of grievances, which extend back over the past five years, and affect almost all departments throughout the factory. During that time there has been a demand for an increased output and also a higher standard of quality. There are various methods adopted to get this increased output, principally that of cutting the prices of the operators. This pernicious method of cutting the prices renders the position intolerable from the workers' point of view, in so far that the more expert a worker becomes the more liable he is to have his prices interfered with. If it is true, as it is said, that the Singer Company pay a third higher rate of wage than the average employer, it is also true that the value of the Singer worker's product is many times greater than that of the workers of any other firm. All we contend for is that if we are compelled to do extra work or higher qualities of work we should receive an extra price. This does not necessarily mean an increase in the nominal wage.

Collective Bargaining

In order to ensure this increased price we feel that the principle of collective bargaining must be established. The management repudiate this right in the present instance, although they have admitted it in the past. But before pointing out any concrete cases, let us say a word as to what we mean by collective bargaining. In the event of a dispute arising in any department the workers claim the right to appoint

a deputation, whether directly concerned or not, to represent their interests. To prove our statement that the management have in the past admitted this principle, not later than five weeks ago, on a dispute arising in No. 10 Department, a deputation not directly concerned waited on the management, who recognised and dealt with the deputation to the satisfaction of the workers. Three weeks later the firm's admission of this principle of collective bargaining was even more emphasised in connection with a dispute in No. 13 Department. In this instance the deputation was composed of workers not only outside the actual dispute, but also outside the department concerned. On the other hand, the firm contend that in the event of a dispute the individuals only concerned have a right to negotiate with them. In most cases this would mean only one individual, and that perhaps a girl, who, it will be seen, would be at a considerable disadvantage. In the present dispute we have a concrete example of how the management treat girls, as, having rectified the grievance of the men, they stated emphatically that they refuse to have any more negotiations with the girls. It will therefore be seen that the establishment of the principle of collective bargaining is essential to the workers maintaining the position that will enable them to negotiate on equal terms with the management.

At this juncture the works manager, a typical Yankee, with all the "sharp" methods of his calibre, appeared upon the scene. He let the Strike Committee know that, for the moment, he would not receive another deputation, but that he would communicate with the workers direct. This he did in the form of a reply post card sent to each individual worker. The following are the terms of the statement on the post card:—

To the Former Employees of the Singer Manufacturing Co., Ltd.

From numerous sources we learn that our former employees do not feel themselves to be fairly represented by the existing so-called "Strike Committee," who hitherto have been attempting to adjust the conditions under which work may be restarted in this factory. We believe that this is so, and that the majority of our former employees wish to resume the work which they left only through an unfortunate misunderstanding or through apparent compulsion.

With this belief, and to assist you in ending the present state of affairs, we invite those so disposed to sign the attached statement and post it to us not later than Wednesday, 5th April.

The previous statements by Mr. Macfarlane, that any grievances at present existing will be carefully investigated immediately after the resumption of work, and that any ascertained injustice will be rectified, is hereby confirmed. In the future as in the past we request that our workers who may consider that they have reason for complaint which cannot be satisfactorily adjusted with their department foremen, should approach the management direct, and if a number of workers are associated in any complaint of this sort, they are quite at liberty in the future as in the past to appoint a deputation to interview the management, but such a deputation must be composed of workers actually engaged on the particular work over which the dispute has arisen.

The Singer Manufacturing Co., Ltd.,
F. A. PARK, Manager.
HUGH MACFARLANE, Superintendent.
3rd April, 1911.

Date,

To the Singer Manufacturing Co., Ltd.

I wish to resume my work, and agree to do so on the day and hour which may be arranged by you, when you can assure me that at least six thousand persons have signed this agreement.

Name

Address

Check No.

Dept. No.

The issue of these post cards had the desired effect. The management did not desire a vote either for or against the terms laid down by them. They did not desire to find if the workers had confidence in the Strike Committee. What they did desire was the demoralisation of the workers, who, by the solidarity shown up to this time, had caused a flutter in the dove-cots of Trade Union officialism. In this effort the management were successful. The fact that the post cards had to be returned within one day after their receipt, consequently the impossibility of having the move discussed in time; the fact that the cards were issued to workers out of the employment of the Company for years,—indeed, it was reported that several cases were known of cards being addressed to dead men;—the co-relative fact that no cards were sent to active strikers; the further fact that all the office staff were asked to sign cards, this meaning a considerable number on the side of the management; all these circumstances added to the most important fact that the workers were unorganised and without any experience of strikes, rendered the task of demoralisations a comparatively easy one.

The Strike Committee sought to counteract this move by asking the workers to send their post cards to the Committee crossed—refer to Strike Committee. When the cards had been returned, a neutral enumerator, in the person of Provost Taylor, counted the cards on both sides. The firm had succeeded in getting 6,527 signatures for the resumption of work on the terms stated on the post card. The Strike Committee were successful to the number of 4,025. The Strike Committee then made overtures to the firm for the purpose of discussing the situation on behalf of the 4,025 workers at their back, but the management were firm, and stated that those who had sent their post cards to the Strike Committee could even yet sign on by sending their name and address on their own stationery. After a short discussion, the Strike Committee decided to recommend a general resumption of work on the following Monday. As to the signing on, they simply ignored the request of the management.



Department meetings of the workers were then held, at which votes were taken for and against a resumption of work, the outcome of this being a overwhelming majority in favour of a start. This was not a collapse, as the capitalist Press had put it, but an orderly return on a compromise. The workers had come out in a body; they were going back in a body. At these meetings the workers also pledged themselves to come out again if the firm should attempt to victimise anyone. That afternoon the Company posted notices at the gates intimating a *general* start on Monday, which shews clearly that the management had issued post cards, not to get the signatures of those willing to resume work, but simply to break up the spirit of solidarity immanent in the workers.

A word now as to the conduct of the workers during this period of almost three weeks. Their solidarity was magnificent up to the issue of the post cards. This solidarity was made possible by the sinking of particular views, by making them subservient to the concrete demands that were being fought for. The Socialist and the non-Socialist, the Christian and the Atheist, sank all their theories and united to help fight the common enemy.

The self-imposed discipline was something to marvel at; for instance, the application to the Strike Committee by individuals desirous of lifting their wages—at a time other than the usual—for information as to how they should act. Then, again, the splendid order and self-control shewn in the demonstrations for wages—an occurrence unique in the industrial history of this country. In these demonstrations the workers gathered in a large field near the Factory, formed themselves into regiments according to their Departments, and marched, each Department showing its own number, and with several bands in attendance, right into the Factory, and, after receiving the wages due to them, marched out again. The magnitude of such a demonstration can be imagined when we consider that it took almost half an hour for the demonstration to pass a given point. This conduct of the workers proves that the unification of the working class on the industrial field is not a chimerical idea but a possibility.

So much for the conduct of the workers in general, now for the conduct of the Trade Unionists employed in Singers. The Sheet Metal Workers, organised in the Scottish Tinsplate and Sheet Metal Workers' Society, came out in support of the girls who had the grievance, and elected delegates to the Strike Committee. This action indicates that even the Trade Unions have not sapped the manhood out of the workers. The Printers, organised in the Scotch Typographical Society, refused to do work other than their own when requested to do so by the management, and were forthwith suspended. (Incidentally, this meant idle benefit.) What did their Union do? It ordered them back to work, and, also, to feed machines themselves; in plain words, ordered them to scab on the feeders who were out. Who said organised scabbery? But the Printers, to their credit be it said, did not go back. Next we come to the Engineers, the blue blood of the working class, the aristocracy of labour, who added still further to their reputation which stinks in the nostrils of all honest men. After being virtually shamed out, they lived up to A.S.E. ethics, deciding at a meeting of A.S.E. members, by a large and enthusiastic majority, to kow-tow to the firm by sending back their post cards. *Requiescat in pace* [May he rest in peace].

Lessons to Be Learned

There can be no doubt as to the ability of the workers to manage their own affairs, as witness the eulogisms by even the capitalist Press; the handling of the vast crowds exemplary in the extreme; the orderliness, the mammoth demonstrations without a single case of drunkenness or misbehaviour.

The one thing that was lacking was a paper to advocate and explain the workers' side of the question. What was lost no one can adequately explain. The suppression and misrepresentation by the orthodox Press of all that was sent to it must stand out as the greatest argument for a workers' owned Press.

The manager stated in one of the leading capitalist papers of Great Britain that he was rendering a great public service in thwarting the pernicious Socialistic teaching that held so much sway throughout the Factory. In this he emulates Mrs Partington.¹

Now the necessity of organisation, permanent, educative, and on modern lines, must be apparent to every one. The fight is on, and plot, plan, scheme, and subterfuge will be tried to alienate the workers from that principle which shall stand good for all time, as far as the workers are concerned,—An Injury to One is an Injury to All.

—*The Socialist*, May 1911

¹ An anecdotal character of Sidmouth, England, who attempted to stem the incoming tide of the Atlantic with a mop, or in some versions a broom, during a great storm in 1824.



Letter Box

J.R., BELLINGHAM, WASH.—“Speaking of close elections....What would happen if the SLP and its Socialist Industrial Union program won by only a little? Wouldn't this open the door to a system such as existed in the old U.S.S.R.?”

The issue would not depend on the ballot, or the counting of votes. The issue would depend on the extent to which the working class is united and prepared to assume control of the economy, i.e., on the extent to which it was organized to enforce its will. If the working class is not prepared to assume control of the economy no amount of votes will bring it a step nearer to socialism, or prepare it to defend its decision. If it is sufficiently united into the SIUs needed to enforce its decision, no amount of ballot box shenanigans could turn it back from completing its mission.

It is inconceivable that socialism would win at the ballot box by a number so small that the outcome would be in doubt. Indeed, even if the formality of vote counting was dispensed with completely at such a juncture, the social atmosphere would be charged with the electricity of impending change. It could not be concealed.

In any event, it is highly unlikely that it will ever come down to a vote, at least not one conducted by the government of the ruling class. Long before then the writing would be on the wall for all to

see. Either the working class will be formed up to occupy the industries and to take charge of any elections it decides are needed, or it will not be prepared, in which case workers are unlikely to vote for something they have shown that they do not want by their failure to organize themselves in preparation for it.

If the working class was not prepared to act when capitalism entered a crisis from which it could not extricate itself, we don't believe the danger then would be the emergence of a Soviet-style system. A more likely danger is a fascist-style lock on the political state to enforce “order” where disorder and chaos, brought on by the crisis, would then prevail.

G.M., SAINT PARIS, OHIO—De Leon's full name was Daniel de Salomoh y Jesurun De Leon. This information comes either from L. Glen Seretan's peculiar “biography” of De Leon, or from a book tracing the genealogy of Jewish families on the Dutch island of Curaçao off the coast of Venezuela, where De Leon was born. We don't remember which, and the title of the latter escapes us; but the information comes from one, the other, or both.

“TOMMY,” VIA E-MAIL—The Socialist Labor Party's views on Leon Trotsky are summed up in its pamphlet *The Nature of Soviet Society*. The SLP publishes nothing about Che Guevara, specifically.

However, the SLP's views on Cuba are summed up in its publication *Is Cuba Socialist?*

Both of these men lived and worked in countries that are usually referred to as “emerging” or “developing” countries. What those countries are emerging from is the preindustrial or agricultural stage of their history. What they are developing into are industrialized capitalist countries. They are striving to reach the stage that the United States and other “advanced” countries reached long ago.

Socialism presupposes a highly developed, industrialized society. Whatever merit Trotsky and Guevara had as advocates of progress in their own countries, their ideas were, quite naturally, developed and conditioned by the circumstances that existed in those countries. Those conditions differ greatly from those that exist in the United States.

American Socialists cannot look back to preindustrial and essentially precapitalist conditions in developing their own ideas. Just as Trotsky and Guevara had to deal with conditions as they found them in their own lands, we must deal with conditions as we find them in the United States. For that reason, the SLP looks to neither Trotsky nor Guevara. Rather, it looks to the works of the American Socialist, Daniel De Leon, who lived and worked in the most advanced of all industrialized capitalist nations.

Note that what we are speaking of is a *constructive* force, not a destructive one. And the very Socialist Industrial Union that takes and holds the industries will set up its own organs of administration. The new socialist government will be composed of representatives of the workers in the various industries.

Note also that such a transition to socialism averts economic paralysis, hence chaos, *by keeping production going*.

The Socialist Industrial Union is the workers' power! Study its principles. Help to build it.

Funds

Thanksgiving Fund

Section Wayne County, Mich. (\$204): G. Olman \$75; A. & G. Sim (\$1 for each year of membership in SLP) \$66; W. & N. Carlen \$50; M. Culpepper \$10; A. Cantarella \$3.

\$25 each Marsha Rawlins, Jennie Seekford; Lester E. Saefke \$20; \$10 each Carl Archambeau, Rick Yord.

Total: \$294

Christmas Box

Chris Dobreff \$200; Stanley W. Andrick \$100; \$50 each Alan Taylor, Anne Vukovich “In memory of Mary & Elia Mitsareff;” Donald Rogers, Lois Kubit; Anonymous \$42; \$25 each William H. Nace, Blake Bearden, Eileen Burns, Bill Romberg; Ray Minnick \$17.25; Albert E. Moore \$20; \$10 each David Peterson, Stephen Hawkins; Brett T. Lamour \$5.50; Anonymous \$1.

Total: \$705.75

Question Period

Daniel De Leon speaks of the “right” of the revolutionary socialist ballot backed up by the “might of the integrally industrially organized workers.” Does “might” mean “force and violence”?

It means force, but not violence. When force and violence are bracketed together they imply military action, i.e., force of a violent and bloody character. But force is not necessarily violence. And the force implicit in the Socialist Industrial Union, as projected by the Socialist Labor Party, is meant to avert violence.

Karl Marx said in *Capital*: “Force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one. It is itself an economic power.” (Our italics.)

The observation is a recognition of two facts—one, that ruling classes cling stubbornly to their power and privileges, not yielding them until they are forced to, and two, real power consists of control of a nation's productive resources. Frederick Engels, dwelling on the same point in *Anti-Dühring*, put it this way:

“...In a word, the triumph of force depends...upon economic power, on economic conditions, on the ability to organize actual material instruments....Economic force is the control of great industry.”

Such is the force implicit in the Socialist Industrial Union as advocated by the SLP. It is (in De

Leon's words) “an equivalent for a military force...a mighty nonmilitary engine of physical force.”

How will this force be applied? The political movement of socialism will establish the *right* to socialize production at the ballot box. Here the superior numerical strength of the workers will register the demand that all the industries, factories, mills, mines, railroads, etc., now the private property of a handful of useless parasites, become the collective property of all the people. And to implement this demand, the workers, organized in the Socialist Industrial Union, will take possession of the industries, factories, etc., and lock out the out-voted capitalist class.

It will not be a matter of marching on the factories as, for example, an army marches on the fortress of the enemy. Actually, since the workers run the industries from top to bottom, they have *de facto* possession. At this very moment workers are running the railroads, communications and energy systems, mines, mills, etc. Workers have charge of the warehouses and they drive the trucks. In short, the workers are in a perfect strategic position to *assume complete control of the nation's economic machinery*. With their “mighty nonmilitary engine of physical force,” the Socialist Industrial Union, they must back up their ballot and establish the Socialist Commonwealth.

activities

Activities notices must be received by the Monday preceding the third Wednesday of the month.

OREGON

Portland

Discussion Meetings—Section Portland holds discussion meetings every second Saturday of the month. Meetings are usually held at the Central Library, but the time varies. For more information please call Sid at 503-226-2881 or visit our Web site at <http://slp.pdx-home.mind-spring.com>. General public invited.

TEXAS

Houston

Discussion Meetings—The SLP group in Houston holds discussion meetings the last Saturday of the month at the Houston Public Library, Franklin Branch, 6440 W. Bellfort, southwest Houston. The time of the meetings varies. Those interested please call 713-721-9296, e-mail reds1964@net-zero.net or visit the group's Web site at <http://home.beseen.com/politics/houstonslp>.

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ALBANY, N. Y.

SLP, P.O. Box 105, Sloansville, NY 12160-0105.

ATHENS, TENN.

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HUNTER COLLEGE, NYC

HunterSLP@aol.com

LONG ISLAND, N. Y.

LongIslandSLP@aol.com

MIAMI

SLP, 506 Hunting Hill Ave., redflag@bellsouth.net

MIDDLETOWN, CONN.

SLP, 506 Hunting Hill Ave., Middletown, CT 06457. Call (860) 347-4003.

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E-mail: DarrellHKnight@aol.com

AUSTRALIA

Brian Blanchard, 58 Forest Rd., Trevallyn, Launceston, Tasmania 7250, Australia. Call or fax 0363-341952.

CANADA

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

SLP, 1550 Laperriere Ave., Ottawa, Ont., K1Z 7T2. Call Doug Irving at (613) 728-5877 (hdqtrs.); (613) 226-6682 (home); or (613) 725-1949 (fax).

VANCOUVER

SLP, Suite 141, 6200 McKay Ave., Box 824, Burnaby, BC, V5H 4M9.

...AFL-CIO Nearing Collapse

(Continued from page 1)

was the intense antiunion campaigns run by employers.”

(To this the *Times* report added that “business executives say more people are not joining unions because many workers see unions as irrelevant and unnecessary and union dues as too expensive.”)

It may be that workers are frequently intimidated by capitalists, and it may be that some workers see unions as “irrelevant and unnecessary.” If that is the case, however, it only leads to new questions about how and why the unions have failed to overcome these perceptions and to unite workers so that capitalist threats and intimidation can be neutralized and overcome.

Fact is that the unions have tied themselves to the ruling class, and despite the occasional disputes that break out between them, the unions have ignored every outrage committed by the capitalists they bargain with in exchange for such bobbles as recognition of the union, the negotiated contract, the closed shop, the check-off system, and anything else that would “guarantee” union control over jobs. As *The People* has pointed out countless times, the AFL-CIO does not organize workers but capitalists, and its selling point has always been that it provides the latter with a disciplined and stable workforce. It has bound workers hand and foot with its “sacred” contract. But that is not the worst of it. It has turned its back on the class struggle and the only reason why a labor movement is needed at all.

If capitalists today feel less of a need for the product that the unions sell it is only because other and more powerful disciplinary forces are at work, forces that the AFL-CIO is not equipped to deal with. The labor movement, in its origins, was not meant to establish “safe” relations with the ruling class. Such relations are impossible. What the labor movement was established for was the emancipa-

tion of the working class from wage slavery. The labor unions have long since betrayed that aim. Worse, they have actively and deliberately militated against it—and the working class has paid the price. What Daniel De Leon had to say on this score is as relevant today as it was when he wrote an open letter to the German Socialist Karl Kautsky in 1912.

“Everyone posted on American affairs knows that the American Federation of Labor, although composed of a mainly labor rank and file, is no more a labor organization than is the army of your emperor, which likewise consists of a mainly workingmen’s soldier constituency. And for reasons virtually identical. As the purpose of your emperor’s army is not to emancipate the working class, but far otherwise and to the contrary; and as that purpose is firmly held in the grip of the army’s officers, from the emperor down; so likewise is the purpose of the AFL far other and to the contrary than the emancipation of the wage earner, and that purpose is as firmly held in the fist of the AFL’s officers ...Gompers, his lieutenants and assistant lieutenants. Agreeable to such a purpose, the unions in the AFL are ‘contracted’ with their employers to scab upon one another; the bulk of the working class is kept out of the unions by a number of schemes, high initiations among them; and the labor movement is hamstrung, dislocated and kept disorganized. The estimate of the AFL made by the Berlin *Vorwaerts* on Aug. 8, 1909, as ‘duerres Holz’ (dead wood), however seemingly severe, stated the fact mildly.”

Sweeney may not have overstated the case when he said that the AFL-CIO may not survive “as a viable institution...” Indeed, the capitalist class, acting through the state, has propped the AFL-CIO up since at least the Great Depression of the 1930s. For that reason it may be said that the AFL-CIO has been incapable of holding

itself up for decades. If it collapses despite that support its demise could clear the way for a new union movement based on sound principles consistent with the true purpose of the labor movement—to tear down capitalism and replace it with socialism.

Amazon.com Targets Workers Who Wanted To Organize a Union

By John-Paul Catusco

On Jan. 30 Amazon.com executives announced plans to lay off 1,300 employees, totaling about 15 percent of its workforce. Among those unfortunate 1,300 are 400 customer service representatives based in Seattle. The 400 Seattle employees had been struggling to form a union to protect their collective futures.

Alan Barclay is an Amazon employee scheduled to be laid off and a member of the Washington Tech/CWA organizing group known as Day2@Amazon.com. He had this to say about the recent events:

“For the past few weeks, we’ve been living at the whims of management we may have never met. Without a contract or recognized voice, we were totally left out of the decision to close the Seattle site. We weren’t even asked for our opinions or allowed to ask questions.”

Barclay sees the recent layoffs as an even greater reason for the remaining employees to unionize.

Amazon.com’s management was fond of referring to its employees as associates and speaking of them as “family” when it issued its antiunion press statements. On Jan. 30, Amazon threw 1,300 members of its family into the streets to move some numbers on Wall Street. It has already announced plans to move the rest of its “outsourced” Customer Service Department to India where it assumes its new Indian family members won’t ask for the same rights as its former American members did. We can only ask of our fellow Indian workers and wage slaves that they keep up the struggle to organize the industry and show Amazon’s management that the working class knows no national boundaries.

255075 100 years ago

Arid Lands

(Weekly People, March 2, 1901)

Out in Nevada, located along the lower part of the Gila River, are three Indian tribes: the Pimas, Maricopas and Papago. The first from time immemorial, the last two for many a generation, have supported themselves largely by agriculture under irrigation. White settlers along the upper portion of the river have been diverting the water for their own irrigation needs, and the result has been that these Indians have been largely deprived of the water which they formerly used. There is not enough water available there now to irrigate their reservation sufficiently so that all of them can be employed in farming. This is the way the Indian “comes in” and is made to join “Brother Labor,” as twin pretexts for the labor- and humanity-grinding Stewarts and Newlandses to capture a plum.

Under the pretense of “humanity toward the Indians,” an amendment has been introduced in the Senate to the Indian appropriation bill. This amendment looks as innocent as a sleeping babe in its

mother’s arms. In point of fact, the amendment is to the Stewart-Newlands arid-land-irrigation grab what the Sherman Act was to the “free and unlimited coinage of silver” movement, i.e., an entering wedge. It is a plan to construct a dam and reservoir 130 miles long, near San Carlos, Ariz., “for the purpose of supplying the Indians with water.” The cost: from two to four million dollars.

In the debate it developed that it was not the Indians, but land grabbers of arid lands nearby who were to be the real beneficiaries—if the dam was ever built. In the Senate, Mr. Stewart half dropped the mask and braced himself up by declaring that the plan was not to be in the interest of the Indians only, but in the interest of the workingman as well!

Who does not recognize in these words the ring of the old song by silver barons (who shot their miners down), only improved at this season by the introduction of the pauper ward of the nation, the Indian, as a particular subject for the “charitable” purposes of these buccaneers?

letters

The Singer Strike

I noted with pleasure the article in the February issue of *The People* on the Clydebank Singer strike of 1911. As a student I passed by the Singer factory five days a week on my way to high school. My father and my older sister worked there until 1927, at which time the Sim family emigrated to Detroit.

Archie Sim
Plymouth, Mich.

An Eye-Opener

Please send two copies of *The Vatican in Politics*. The recent article on the Hitler connection [“Hitler’s Pope,” January issue] was very eye opening. Thanks.

Ken Smith
Milwaukee, Wis.

Subject: Congratulations

I think it very difficult to hold Marxist ideas in your country and you do a good job.

Stefano Pavani
e-mailed from Italy

ROOM Reservations

SLP • P.O. BOX 218
MTN. VIEW, CA 94042-0218

Enclosed is my check/money order in the amount of _____. Please make the following room reservations for the undersigned for Saturday, June 2, at the Holiday Inn—Great America in Santa Clara, Calif., at the rate of \$93.07 per night, tax included. I will share these quarters with _____.

I will arrive (day and date) _____ and depart _____.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ APT. _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please do not mail cash. Use separate sheet if necessary. Make check/money order payable to the Socialist Labor Party. All reservations must be made through the SLP, not the Holiday Inn, and must be received by Friday, May 18.

2001 SLP National Convention BANQUET Reservations

SLP • P.O. BOX 218
MTN. VIEW, CA 94042-0218

Enclosed is my check/money order in the amount of _____. Please make the following reservations for the SLP’s 2001 National Convention Banquet on Saturday, June 2, at the Holiday Inn in Santa Clara, Calif., at \$12 per adult and \$5 for children age 12 & under. Social hour at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 7 p.m.

_____ADULTS _____CHILDREN

_____CHICKEN MARSALA _____SPINACH LASAGNA (VEGETARIAN)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ APT. _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please don’t mail cash. Checks/money orders payable to the Socialist Labor Party. Reservations must be made through the SLP, not the Holiday Inn, and must be received by Monday, May 28.



Our Annual Tribute to The Paris Commune of 1871

On March 18, 1871, the workers of Paris, France, attempted for the first time in modern history to construct a classless society. Their effort was in response to the terrible conditions imposed upon them by capitalist exploitation. It was precipitated by their masters' attempt to take possession of the artillery that the workers themselves had purchased for their National Guard.

French capitalism had just been defeated in the Franco-Prussian War. The war was initiated by the French emperor Napoleon III in a desperate effort to save his throne through war fever. It was welcomed by Prussia's "Iron Chancellor," Otto von Bismarck, who saw in a Prussian victory a chauvinistic opportunity to create the German Empire. In short, the Prussian junkers and capitalists defeated the armies of French capitalism.

The collapse of the French Empire was followed by the proclamation of a republic by the workers of Paris. But representatives of the propertied class usurped power. With the approval of their Prussian peers and conquerors, the French capitalists then turned on the workers of Paris. The workers' resistance to the capitalists' attempt to disarm them resulted in the proclamation of the Commune.

Karl Marx called the Paris Commune "a workingmen's government...the bold champion of the emancipation of labor, emphatically international." But it survived for less than three months. On May 28, 1871, the last of the Commune's defenders were crushed by superior numbers, following a betrayal that allowed the reaction's troops



Walter Crane

to enter the city.

During its brief life, however, the Commune organized the workers for the

management of their workshops. Crime was literally ended, for the criminals fled Paris with the capitalists, their social kins-

men. The separation of church and state was decreed. Paris ceased to be the playground of exploiters, domestic and foreign. Universal suffrage was instituted. The standing army and the police were abolished. Public service was done at workmen's wages. The educational institutions were opened to the people. Science itself was freed from the fetters imposed upon it by class prejudice and governmental force. All functionaries held their positions by election, were held responsible and were subject to recall.

Capitalism has lied that the Commune held power by terror. Actually, it formally abolished the guillotine. The terror of the Commune was the revenge the capitalists took when they reconquered the workers by military power and betrayal.

Men, women and children, as prisoners, were shot down in cold blood. A notorious militarist arbitrarily picked prisoners from lines for execution, long after the fighting was over. More than 10,000 Communards were killed in their last resistance. By June 1872, the formal "trials" of prisoners (after the main butchery was over) brought death to 270 more and other punishments (various forms of imprisonment, exile, etc.) to more than 13,000 additional men, women and children.

The hatred shown the French workers by their French masters had no parallel in modern European history to that time. Even the German conquerors had never seen anything like it. And no wonder! National differences among capitalists don't submerge class similarities. As Benjamin Disraeli said, the workers are a nation apart from the capitalists.

The Socialist Labor Party honors the workers of the Paris Commune on this 130th anniversary of their pioneering effort to build a better society. And it draws Marxian lessons from their experience to be used in attaining the better society they shed their blood to build.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Elizabeth Cady Stanton & The Struggle for Women's Rights

By B.G.

The 19th-century women's movement in the United States had its roots in the movement to abolish slavery, as many women of conscience enlisted in antislavery organizations but often found themselves barely tolerated by male members and frequently denied voting rights in the organization. Their own secondary status in the movement to free slaves impelled these women to begin thinking about their own status in American society.

Abolitionist Henry Stanton and his new bride, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, attended the World Anti-Slavery Convention in England in 1840. It was there that the women delegates faced the humiliation of segregation in a special railed-off space and the refusal of seating as voting members because of their gender. William Lloyd Garrison, the radical American abolitionist who supported women's equality, moved into the women's section and sat with them throughout the meetings in protest over their inequitable treatment. To Mrs. Stanton, Garrison was a new hero who opposed the hypocrisy of these supposedly enlightened men whose speeches on the subordinate status of women both shocked and angered her.

It was also at the London meeting that Mrs. Stanton became acquainted with the American Quaker abolitionist and women's rights advocate, Lucretia Mott. Mrs. Mott was 22 years older than Elizabeth and began to serve as a mentor to the younger woman. She opened up a whole new world of ideas to her young friend, telling her of the social theories of Mary Wollstonecraft

and her demands for women's equality and urging Elizabeth to read widely from the progressive writers of the day. She assured Stanton that she had as much right to think for herself as any of the male leaders of any age did, and the right to be guided by her own convictions.

"I felt a newborn sense of dignity and freedom," Elizabeth said later of this experience. "Mrs. Mott was to me an entire new revelation of womanhood."

Before the two women left London, they agreed to hold a convention and organize a society to advocate women's rights when they returned home. That meeting would not be held until 1848 at Seneca Falls, N.Y., but it was a meeting that would launch the women's rights movement in the United States.

The major demand of the movement was votes for women. It was a demand that was met with derision by the male populace and by most legislators, and sometimes with violence from rowdies. A proposal for women's suffrage was voted down by the United States Congress in 1866 and was nowhere mentioned in the 14th Amendment, which was designed to define citizenship and to affirm the right of male citizens to vote and was meant specifically as a benefit of citizenship for the former male slaves.

The women's rights advocates were also singularly unsuccessful in getting women suffrage accepted on a state level. Votes for women did not come on a national level until the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, long after the death of the early

leaders of the movement.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the major thinker of the women's movement in the period following the Civil War. She wrote numerous articles and lectured widely throughout the United States. Her concerns were far wider than votes for women and encompassed all social, legal and religious issues affecting women. She advocated advanced education for women, proposed broadening the divorce laws to allow women to escape an abusive marriage, and criticized religious theologies and holy writ that downgraded women and enforced their subjection.

In keeping with the latter sentiment, Stanton sought out some learned and insightful women to assist her in extracting all references to women in the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments, and writing commentaries on these passages. What emerged from this effort was a rationalistic view of the Bible and a critique of biblical passages that reflected the patriarchal culture of the ancient New East and Mediterranean world that presented woman as a creature to be kept in subjection. They also took issue with the biblical view that woman, through Eve, was the originator of sin in the world. In addition, Stanton and her committee commented on passages in the Bible that, with seeming contradiction to the previous view, described capable and righteous women such as Deborah, the four daughters of Philip the evangelist, Lydia and Priscilla, who were rulers, prophetesses, religious teachers and pillars of society.

The committee placed Bible events in their historical context, noted that the Bible was written by men and not by God, and stated that many of its customs and concepts belonged to a bygone barbarous age.

This work, *The Woman's Bible*, was published in 1895 and horrified the more conservative members of the women's suffrage movement. At the next annual convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in 1896, *The Woman's Bible* was publicly disowned despite an impassioned plea by Susan B. Anthony, who recognized that the motion under consideration would also be a vote to censure Stanton. After the motion passed, Stanton henceforth was marginalized by the women's movement.

Despite the controversy, *The Woman's Bible* was a best-seller in its day, went through several printings and was translated into several languages.

In her Introduction to the work, Stanton had stated: "How can woman's position be changed from that of a subordinate to an equal, without opposition, without the broadest discussion of all the questions involved in her present degradation?" In order for this to be achieved, she emphasized, "an entire revolution in all existing institutions is inevitable."

Elizabeth Cady Stanton had insights into the structure of society that the more conservative suffragists either lacked or refused to confront. She understood that both institutions and ideological constructs worked together to place women in a secondary status and would have to be transformed for women to progress and to achieve true liberation and equality.

E-MAIL THE PEOPLE

Writers of letters to *The People* via e-mail should address their communications to thepeople@igc.org.